

Cardiovascular Health: What You Should Know



*Did you know that, in the United States, **more women die from heart disease** than from any other cause, including all types of cancer?*

Coronary artery disease is the main form of heart disease. It develops over many years and affects the blood vessels of the heart. It can result in a heart attack, disability, and/or death. A heart attack occurs when an artery becomes blocked, preventing oxygen from getting to the heart.

Many women fail to recognize the seriousness of heart disease. One reason may be the common misperception that heart disease can be “cured” with surgery. Surgery can help restore blood and oxygen flow to the heart, but the heart remains damaged.

Risk Factors:

Risk factors are habits or conditions that increase the chance of developing a disease. Many of the risk factors for heart disease can be prevented or controlled. Risk factors for heart disease do not simply “add up” - it can multiply your risk of heart attack, and having more than one risk factor is especially serious. Risk factors for heart disease are:

- Smoking
- High Blood Pressure
- High Blood Cholesterol
- Overweight/Obesity
- Physical Inactivity
- Diabetes
- Family history of early heart disease
- Age (For women, 55 and older)

Steps You Can Take for a Healthier Heart:

Smoking: Don’t smoke or quit if you do. Ask your healthcare provider for cessation strategies.

Blood Pressure: Control your blood pressure. Ask your healthcare provider what a healthy number is for you and how often you need your blood pressure checked.

Cholesterol: Lower your cholesterol to the right level, based on your personal risk. Eat foods low in cholesterol and saturated fats.

Overweight/Obesity: Ask your health care provider what a healthy weight is for you. Lose or maintain weight with physical activity most days of the week and a diet that includes plenty of whole grain products, vegetables and fruits.

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Physical Activity: Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Although an overweight person may face special challenges, moving any part of your body- even for a short time- can make you healthier.

Diabetes: A normal fasting blood glucose level is below 110. Talk with your health care provider about when you should be tested, and what your glucose level is. If you have diabetes, monitor and control your blood sugar levels.

Every Woman Matters Cares about Your Heart Health:

The Every Woman Matters Program can help you receive a free or low-cost health exam that includes screenings for heart disease. In addition to breast and cervical cancer screenings, clients ages 40 through 64 are eligible for blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and diabetes screenings.

Every Woman Matters clients who have been screened for heart disease can also take part in activities and receive information related to changing and maintaining healthy behaviors such as a healthy diet and being physically active.

Additional Resources:

National Heart, Lung, & Blood Association	www.hearttruth.gov
American Heart Association	www.americanheart.org
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women and Heart Disease	www.womenheart.org

For More Information:

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